



Hon. Pedro R. Pierluisi
Statement and Questions as Prepared for Delivery
Hearing on S. 744 and the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986:
Lessons Learned or Mistakes Repeated?
House Committee on the Judiciary
May 22, 2013

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I want to begin by expressing my strong support for the passage of comprehensive immigration reform legislation during this session of Congress. We need to fix our broken immigration system so that it works for all Americans, helps our economy and advances our national interest. I believe that S. 744 provides a solid framework for this purpose and I'm confident that the efforts of my colleagues in the House will also yield results.

Having said this, I must express my concern that Puerto Rico is currently excluded in the definition of "Southern Border" in S. 744 and therefore in the bill's strong border security provisions. As many of you are aware, in recent years, while the security situation on the U.S. border with Mexico has improved by most if not all statistics, Puerto Rico has experienced a dramatic increase in the level of drug related violence on the island that is directly tied to the territory's use as a transshipment point for illegal drugs destined for stateside markets.

The recent surge in violence, which has been acknowledged by a multitude of top ranking federal law enforcement officials including Mr. Aguilar, has pushed the island's already historically high murder

rate to approximately six times above the national average. The cause of the drug related violence is directly associated with the transit of illegal narcotics into the territory through its under-secured and under-resourced maritime borders. While there are indications that federal law enforcement, mostly DHS and its component agencies, have worked to increase their operations in Puerto Rico in recent months, the underlying security dynamics remain the same for the 3.7 million U.S. citizens residing in the territory.

Last year's CJS bill recognized that, "efforts by Federal law enforcement to reduce drug trafficking and associated violence in the Southwest border region have affected trafficking routes and crime rates in the Caribbean." Stated simply, if we try to plug the U.S. border with Mexico without increasing security in America's Caribbean border, we're just going to displace the criminal activity from one U.S. border to another.

Therefore, I believe that U.S. territories in the Caribbean (PR and USVI) must be included in any border security package that is considered by Congress.

Question:

David Aguilar:

- Do you agree with this?